

“Leadership and the Church”

I Timothy

Downtown and Lexington

May 24, 2020

1 Timothy 3:1-13

The saying is trustworthy: If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task. 2 Therefore an overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, 3 not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. 4 He must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive, 5 for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God's church? 6 He must not be a recent convert, or he may become puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil. 7 Moreover, he must be well thought of by outsiders, so that he may not fall into disgrace, into a snare of the devil.

8 Deacons likewise must be dignified, not double-tongued, not addicted to much wine, not greedy for dishonest gain. 9 They must hold the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience. 10 And let them also be tested first; then let them serve as deacons if they prove themselves blameless. 11 Their wives likewise must be dignified, not slanderers, but sober-minded, faithful in all things. 12 Let deacons each be the husband of one wife, managing their children and their own households well. 13 For those who serve well as deacons gain a good standing for themselves and also great confidence in the faith that is in Christ Jesus.

Good morning family my name is Allen from Downtown. Today's passage comes from I Timothy 3:1-13 and as we read, this passage of scripture lays out the qualifications for overseers and deacons. The character standards for those who are to lead, shepherd, and serve the church.

Not sure about your church background, but kind of assume you might have had some interesting experience with church leadership. For me, I grew up in a small town at a first baptist church. We had a senior pastor who seemed to run everything but was rather cold and distant. He taught from a stage but never engaged personally, at least not with me. The other pastoral staff, the Associate Pastor, a Youth group guy, and the minister of music were lots more personable but still not very relatable. And of course, we also had deacons. But as a kid, I wasn't sure what a deacon's role was other than 'be old' and kind of act like the church hall monitor, felt like they were strategically stationed around every corner making sure I followed the rules.

It's not the prettiest picture and many people have rebelled against their experiences of churches and church leadership. **So my goals for today are twofold. First, I want to clear up any misconceptions about church leadership. Second, I want us to celebrate what God has done and is doing in our church family.**

To get us started, I am actually going to skip down a couple of verses to 3:14-15. This is one of the passages we started this whole sermon series with. It is the summary verse for why Paul wrote this letter to Timothy.

I Timothy 3: 14-15

I hope to come to you soon, but I am writing these things to you so that, if I delay, you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, a pillar and buttress of the truth.

Paul is writing to Timothy so that everyone may know how they are to function as a church. How to be a household, how to be family.

Think with me about how your household functioned, whether its when you were a kid or maybe currently as you are learning to parent or for some of you think back to when your kids were in the house. What was the atmosphere like day today? What were some of your favorite memories?

For some of us this is nostalgic and we look fondly back on our household. For others of us this is a painful process full of hurt and/or regret. It depends on how your family functioned.

God established roles and responsibilities within the family so that the household can function and flourish. Parents are called to bring their children up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord and children are to honor their mother and father. Without good leadership in the family, I can prove both through research and anecdotal evidence things go bad.

Similarly, God wants his church, his household to function like a healthy family with roles and responsibilities that lead to the church flourishing. Like good parents to a family, God establishes leadership in the church for the good of the church. God has gifted his church with overseers and deacons to serve and lead our church. These are specific roles within the church, but more than simply what they do, the emphasis is on who they are.

So let's bring some clarity to Leadership in the Church: There are two leadership roles in the church: overseer and deacon. Let's begin by looking a the office fo overseer.

First Paul says, **“The saying is trustworthy: If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task.**

The office of an overseer: Not a word we use in everyday conversation about church leadership. We tend to just use the word pastor. This works out because the words Overseer, Elder, and Pastor are used interchangeably in the Bible. For example in I Peter 5 1-3. Elders are called “to shepherd or pastor the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, as an overseer.” These are not 3 different roles, but rather one role described in 3 different ways. For simplicity we just use the word Pastor. But each of these words does help clarify the role of pastor.

- Elder - a term from village life or in synagogue life, an elder is someone more mature. To be looked up to and followed.
- Pastor - a term from agrarian life, a shepherd tends the flock. To look after, to feed, to care for,

and to protect.

- Overseer - someone in leadership. Someone who both gives direction and also makes sure things are done right and moving in the right direction.

As Bailey taught last week, we believe in the plurality of male eldership and the main role of pastors is to teach and lead the church. We love the plurality of leadership because we are able to let one another lead out in giftedness, we are protected from a personality-driven church, and we also are able to shoulder the weight together. I love being a pastor here and one of those reasons is because of who I get to pastor with.

Now let's look at the three ways a pastor is called to lead. A Pastor is called to lead by example through teaching with authority.

1. Pastors lead by example. Elders are to be looked up to and followed. One of the primary roles of leaders in the church is to be an example for the church. To set the spiritual climate. The way we say it is, "You can teach people what you know, but you reproduce who you are." The list of qualifications is exemplified by leaders, but they are actually the standard for all of the church to follow. So, let's walk through them in verses 1-7:

The saying is trustworthy: If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task. - It's a "noble" task - in Greek the word is "Kalos" meaning beautiful, good, worthy, honorable.

2 Therefore - in light of this noble task,

an overseer must be above reproach, - like a summary heading for everything that follows. No huge behavior flaws, nothing apparent.

the husband of one wife, - a one-woman man, doesn't have to be married, but faithful to God's standard for sex and marriage.

sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, - get to teaching in just a few.

3 not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. - Freedom. Not consumed and overrun or controlled or mastered by appetites or behaviors

4 He must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive, 5 for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God's church? - can't be trusted to manage the household of God if you are not able to manage your own.

6 He must not be a recent convert, or he may become puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil. - already hit on, must be tried and tested.

7 Moreover, he must be well thought of by outsiders, so that he may not fall into disgrace, into a snare of the devil.

We won't be able to work through these of the character qualifications in more detail so if you want further unpacking of these qualifications we will have a link to a previous sermon that went through each of them.

What I do want to talk about is something I heard D.A. Carson say when he was preaching on this passage. It took me off guard at first but then made total sense. He said this list of qualifications for pastors was pretty unexceptional. Other than the ability to teach, required for pastors which we will get to in a minute, these characteristics are not that unusual or even uniquely reserved for pastors. It doesn't say pastors must have a superior iq, or a specific personality type, nor does it say you need some superb education, rather the things listed are: don't get drunk, don't rage out, but be gentle. In fact, every entry is mandated in the NT for all believers. The list shouldn't be that uncharacteristic of Christians in general. The difference is that these characteristics should be exemplified in pastors.

Mom said she used to put pastors on a pedestal until I become one. Now that could be an insult, but it's more of a realization. As in, pastors are not some other type of person. Not men to be revered from a distance. But rather men to be followed. It requires maturity in these virtues but pastors are still people in need of a savior like everyone else and all of us are likewise called to be sanctified and conformed into the image of Christ. Pastors are there as an example, men to follow on this journey.

As a family of churches we have ten pastors, three pastors in training, and 1 church planting candidate. Our PITs and Church Planting Candidates have all moved through our Leadership Pipeline starting by joining a LifeGroup to Leading a Group, to Coaching Groups. They then entered into our PIT track that is a minimum of 1.5 years that focuses on shepherding, leading, and teaching. More than I can get to, but one of the huge components is getting to know them, working alongside them, and vetting their character to make sure we can confidently ask you to follow their example and leadership.

As you follow along in your reading this week when you get to this list of qualifications I want you to think about them personally. Yes pastors must exhibit these characteristics, but the call is for you to follow us as we follow Jesus. We are all to be moving in the way of Jesus.

2. Pastors lead through teaching: Shepherds are called to feed the flock.

As you noticed there is only one specific ability listed for pastors. Every other qualification was on character. The reason that the one ability is listed is that it is foundational to the role of a pastor. Pastors must be **“able to teach.”**

This theme is threaded throughout Paul's instruction to Timothy that we have talked about in previous weeks and will continue to be unpacked moving forward.

The ability to teach means that pastors must know God's word, we are to personally Live out God's word, able to clearly teach God's word, and pastors also must protect God's word, guarding against false teaching. There are warning throughout the NT about false teaching and false teachers. Pastors lead the body of Christ and help it to grow into maturity by faithfully preaching and teaching God's word.

We will get into this next week, but every single day we are bombarded with false teaching and we are surrounded with lies that are so easy to believe. Our goal in teaching is not simply for information but for application and transformation. We want to teach in such a way that it transforms us into the people of God. Growing in love and affection for Jesus and for others. Leading to confession, repentance, and growth.

And finally...

3. Pastors lead with Authority: Overseers manage with delegated authority

Authority often has a negative connotation. It has a bad rap. Some even believe that all authority is bad or all authority must be questioned because power corrupts. There is validity to these assumptions in that we have all seen and experienced negative authority. But the reality is sin corrupts everything and authority is no different. And just because we see the effects of sin, doesn't mean that authority is wrong or bad.

The Bible honors authority. In fact, God has all authority and he distributes it. To follow in the way of Jesus is to subject yourself to authority, the concept and application are found throughout scripture. Kids to parents, Employees to bosses, Citizens to Government, Members to Pastors. Pastors to the Chief Shepherd Jesus.

Jesus is the Chief Shepherd, we as your pastors are just under shepherds. He has given his authority to us and trusted us to lead his people. Pastors are responsible for the flock and accountable to Jesus for how we lead.

This means that those under that authority are to listen and to follow. **Also implied is the authority to discipline** when those in the family who refuse to listen or to follow. To point out their error and call them back. We want Jesus above everything and are willing to confront and rebuke family who desires something different.

Last word on authority if it still freaks you out. Jesus is our example of authority - He said I did not come to be served, but as a servant to lay down my life as a ransom. Servant leaders following in the way of Jesus. It is his authority extended to us, but ultimately it means us laying down our lives to serve our church family.

This is not a responsibility we take lightly. The hardest part of leading our church family often happens behind closed doors with pastors begging and pleading with the family to follow after Jesus and not to be deceived by idols of the heart and the temptations of the world. This is what keeps us up at night or wakes us up in the middle of the night. It's part of the weight we carry on our shoulders. We will give an account before the Lord of how we shepherded your souls.

Let me get a little more personal. Pastoring our church family has meant over the years...

- We've cried for longer than I care to admit about things that have happened at our church. The destruction of sin, the pain of loss, the shock of tragedy. We give our lives to building this church, to loving you as a people and when you hurt we hurt.
- We've done our best to do what is right and been made out to be the bad guys. Been told I am the reason someone is unhappy, been told someone can't even be in a room with me.

I share our tears and rejections to let you in on something that is real and might be easily forgotten. Your pastors love you. We really do. We feel a deep connection to you and a responsibility to lead and shepherd you. We want what is best for you and our church family.

Now let's look at the second leadership role which comes up in verse 8, the office of Deacons or Deaconesses

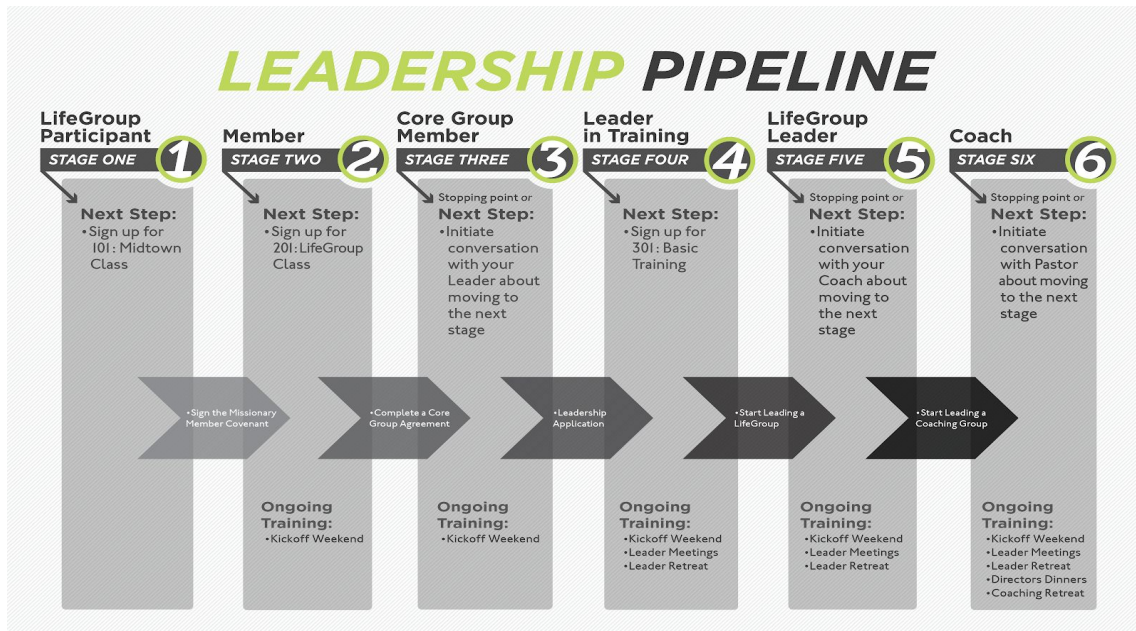
The Greek word diakonos (dee-ak'-on-os) means "servant," so the office of deacon is someone who is responsible for various areas of service in the church. We first see the role of deacon in **Acts 6**.

Acts 6: 2-4

And the twelve summoned the full number of the disciples and said, "It is not right that we should give up preaching the word of God to serve tables. Therefore, brothers, pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we will appoint to this duty. But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word."

Deacons were instituted so that elders/pastors could focus on preaching and prayer. We don't use the word deacon in our church leadership, but we have people in deacon roles all over our church. We tend to use the word director or coach, signifying men and women in our church who are leaders of leaders. One of our leadership goals is to be volunteer driven-staff supported. We have male and female volunteers serving all over the place so that our pastors can focus on preaching, leading, prayer, and care.

So you have an accurate picture of how leadership works in our church family, here is what we call our leadership pipeline. This is our process for developing and empowering leaders in our church family.



If someone comes up to me and says I feel called to be a pastor. I will always respond, great, that is a noble task, are you in a LifeGroup. That is always our first step. Be in a group. Be committed to people and live in an open and honest community. This is the first step in becoming a leader in our church family. To be a good leader you must first know what it means to follow.

Because of this passage that emphasizes character, we don't rush anyone into leadership. We want to give people the opportunity to prove their character and it takes time to get to know someone. In fact, both lists of qualifications for a pastor and a deacon include mention of development and the process of being ready to take on such a role. For a pastor it says, **“He must not be a recent convert, or he may become puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil.”** And then for a deacon it says, **“10 And let them also be tested first; then let them serve as deacons if they prove themselves blameless.** There must be a time of testing and preparation. It is both a protection for the church and for the individual.

Gosh, I won't name any names, but I remember a few years ago one pastor saying, I am not even sure this dude is a Christian much less do I trust him to lead anything or anybody. Now, years later, we gladly hold this guy up before the church and ask you to confidently follow him. This is some of the ministry we are most proud of, seeing boys who aspired to lead become men over time through the process of development. Guys itching for leadership, but lacking in the maturity who willingly stuck it out to become trusted men of character.

Deacons lead by example through serving.

8 Deacons likewise (and also deacons, its an inclusive linkage, deacons are related to elders with a list of qualifications) must be dignified, not double-tongued, not addicted to much wine, not greedy for

dishonest gain.

Paul continues with a list of qualifications for deacons. Again because of time I will not be able to unpack each of these characteristics, but just as I mentioned with the qualification of elders, the qualifications for deacons are not extraordinary. They apply to all of us and everyone's goal is to use this list to both hold leaders to a specific standard, but everyone of us is called to follow in the way of Jesus and we should all be aspiring to these characteristics. Deacons are to help set the tone, and to help others follow Jesus with their example.

Leading through Serving:

As mentioned earlier, the role of a deacon is to serve the church and to free up pastors for preaching, shepherding and leading. In our context, we have lots of men and women faithfully serving the church in various capacities. Some are in mercy roles like benevolence and STC, some are in shepherding roles like LifeGroup Coaches, some are in administrative roles to keep us organized and caring for people through good planning and details, and others are in specialty roles using their unique giftedness, training, and expertise to serve the church.

It's a beautiful example of the body of Christ in its many facets working together to accomplish the mission and purpose of the church. Our church and us as pastors are dependent upon deacons to faithfully serve our church family through all of these various roles.

Conclusion: As I conclude, I want to share some encouraging perspective on our church. Part of our reputation as a church in our city and even in the state is we are a church that actively and intentionally develops, empowers, and deploys leaders. Now to be honest with you this has occurred both intentionally, but also by necessity.

For our Downtown Church, if we are not continually developing leaders then we won't continue to exist. 75% of people who live in Downtown Columbia have lived here less than 5 years. And sure enough, from our 2014 member list, 75% of those people are no longer living here. We are constantly seeing people move away and have tried our best to invite people to consider staying but the reality is, that's the nature of our city. This transience affects us in so many ways, one of which is that we need to get you moving quickly in our Leadership Pipeline So we have to help people get sorted into positions of meaningful service and leadership very quickly and we are always working to develop people and leaders.

So let me take you back to our Leadership and give you some quick stats.

- We have over 700 members. 200 new members in the past 18 months.
- Of our 700+ members over 82% are at least core group members or more.
- Just a few weeks ago, we had 55 member from 27 different groups complete the 201:LifeGroup Class to become new core group members.
- We currently have over 100 people serving at LifeGroup Leaders and next month I am hosting our 301: Basic Training and we are inviting 35 Leaders in Training to get further trained up on how to lead a LifeGroup.

These are huge wins for us, moving people through our pipeline, developing leaders and empowering them for ministry.

We do this intentionally and by necessity. Obviously there is a pain in all the transience, but there is also a unique opportunity. We get to send leaders out all over the place with Midtown DNA. Just this week I was contacted by a leader of another church in another city who recently had former Midtown Members who joined. He was asking to meet with me because he wanted to learn about our group structure and our leadership pipeline. Those former members were so impacted here they are trying to bring what we have here to bear in their new context.

Another way to think about our leadership development is, this is why we are able to continue to be a church-planting church. As you know we are sending out Tim and Lindsay Olson along with a team of about fifty people to plant a church in Charlotte. To be a Jesus-Centered Family on Mission in the Queen City. Not only have we trained up Tim over the past three years as one of our Church Planting Candidate, but we as a Family of Churches are sending with him a loaded team of Core Members, LifeGroup Leaders and Coaches. Men and women trained for the work of ministry, willing to uproot their lives to bring the gospel to bear in an under-reached community of Charlotte. What God is doing here in our church is working and we get to spread it into other communities.

I could continue on talking about the good of what God has been doing in our church family, but I would like to end with this.

In verse 13 Paul says, **“For those who serve well as deacons gain a good standing for themselves and also great confidence in the faith that is in Christ Jesus.**

“good standing” refers to respect and appreciation from the church. Those who are leading in our church are worthy of honor so I would exhort you to encourage your leaders today and throughout this week.

1. Pray for leaders. Pray for their spiritual health, for their endurance in ministry, to continue to faithfully serve.
2. Next, take time to think about how you have seen Jesus work through your LGL, Coach or Pastor. Then take a minute to send them an encouraging text or potentially write them a letter. Let them know you prayed for them and appreciate the way they serve our church family.

Pray.